SHADOW STRIKES
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THE Shadow STRIKES!
JONES • WHIGHAM • BEATTY

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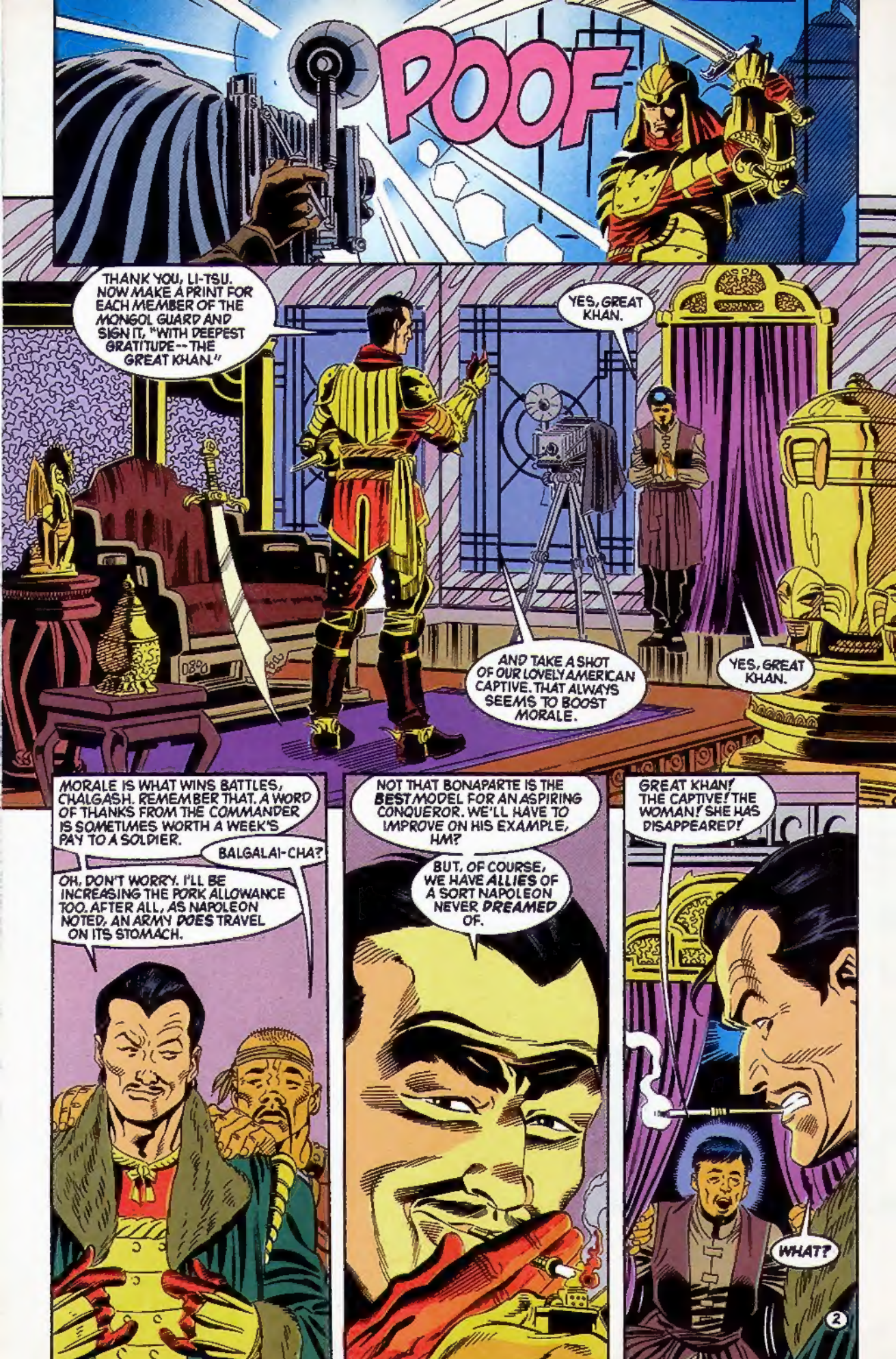

POOF
THANK YOU, LI-TSU. NOW MAKE A PRINT FOR EACH MEMBER OF THE MONGOL GUARD AND SIGN IT, "WITH DEEPEST GRATITUDE -- THE GREAT KHAN."
YES, GREAT KHAN.
AND TAKE A SHOT OF OUR LOVELY AMERICAN CAPTIVE. THAT ALWAYS SEEMS TO BOOST MORALE.
YES, GREAT KHAN.
MORALE IS WHAT WINS BATTLES, CHALGASH. REMEMBER THAT. A WORD OF THANKS FROM THE COMMANDER IS SOMETIMES WORTH A WEEK'S PAY TO A SOLDIER.
BALGALAI-CHA?
OH, DON'T WORRY. I'LL BE INCREASING THE PORK ALLOWANCE TOO. AFTER ALL, AS NAPOLEON NOTED, AN ARMY DOES TRAVEL ON ITS STOMACH.
NOT THAT BONAPARTE IS THE BEST MODEL FOR AN ASPIRING CONQUEROR. WE'LL HAVE TO IMPROVE ON HIS EXAMPLE, HM?
BUT, OF COURSE, WE HAVE ALLIES OF A SORT NAPOLEON NEVER DREAMED OF.
GREAT KHAN! THE CAPTIVE! THE WOMAN! SHE HAS DISAPPEARED!
WHAT?
2

WHAT ARE THOSE GUARDS DOING? WHERE ARE THEIR MINDS?
NOW, WHERE WOULD SHE GO--?
GULUUM BATAI JA--
NO! SHE WOULDN'T TRY TO REACH THE SURFACE!

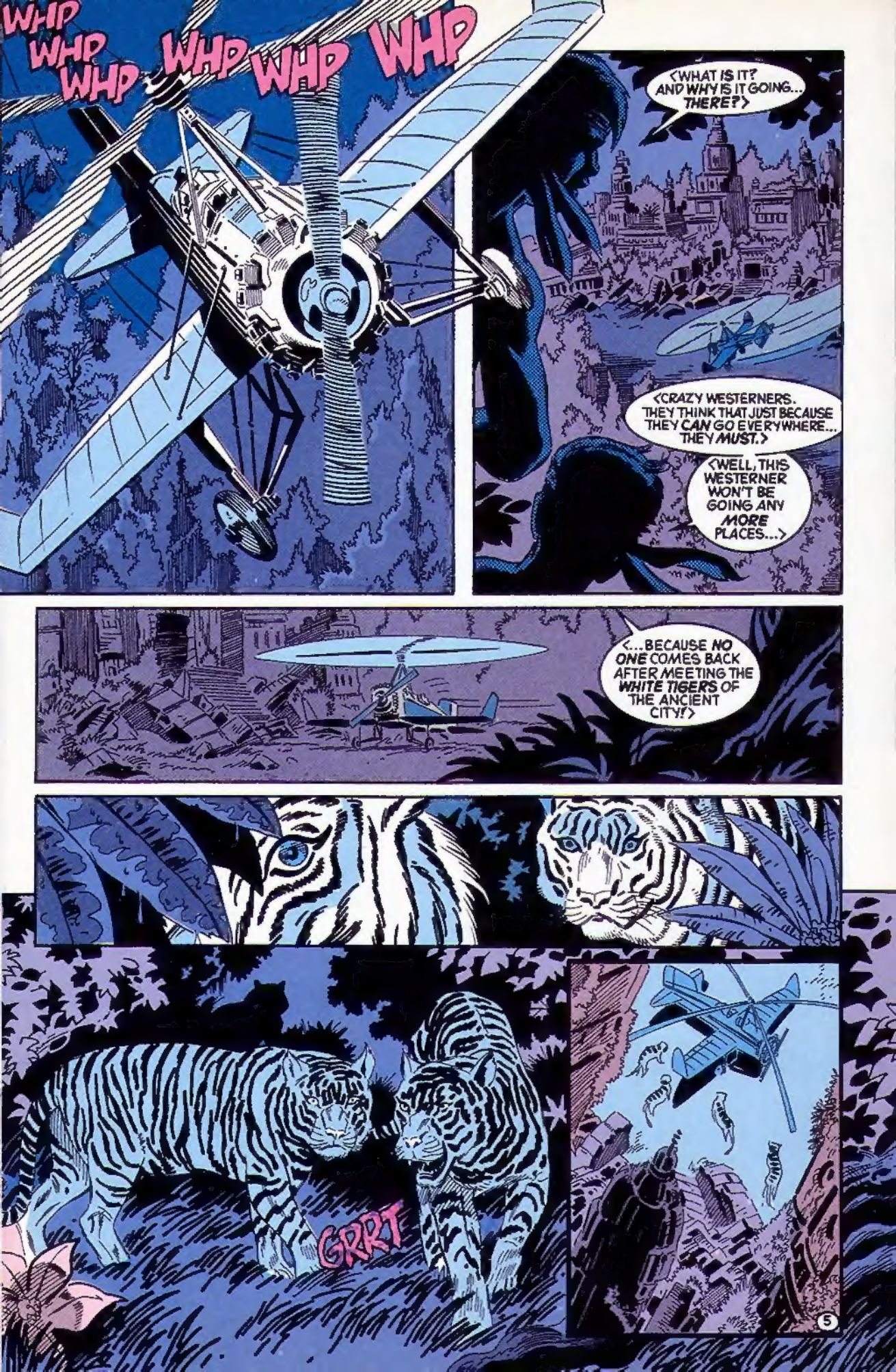
OUR MISS LANE IS FAR TOO COURAGEOUS MERELY TO ATTEMPT AN ESCAPE...
...AND FAR TOO EFFICIENT TO THINK SHE CAN ACCOMPLISH ANY-THING ON FOOT IN THE INTERIOR OF ASIA.
3

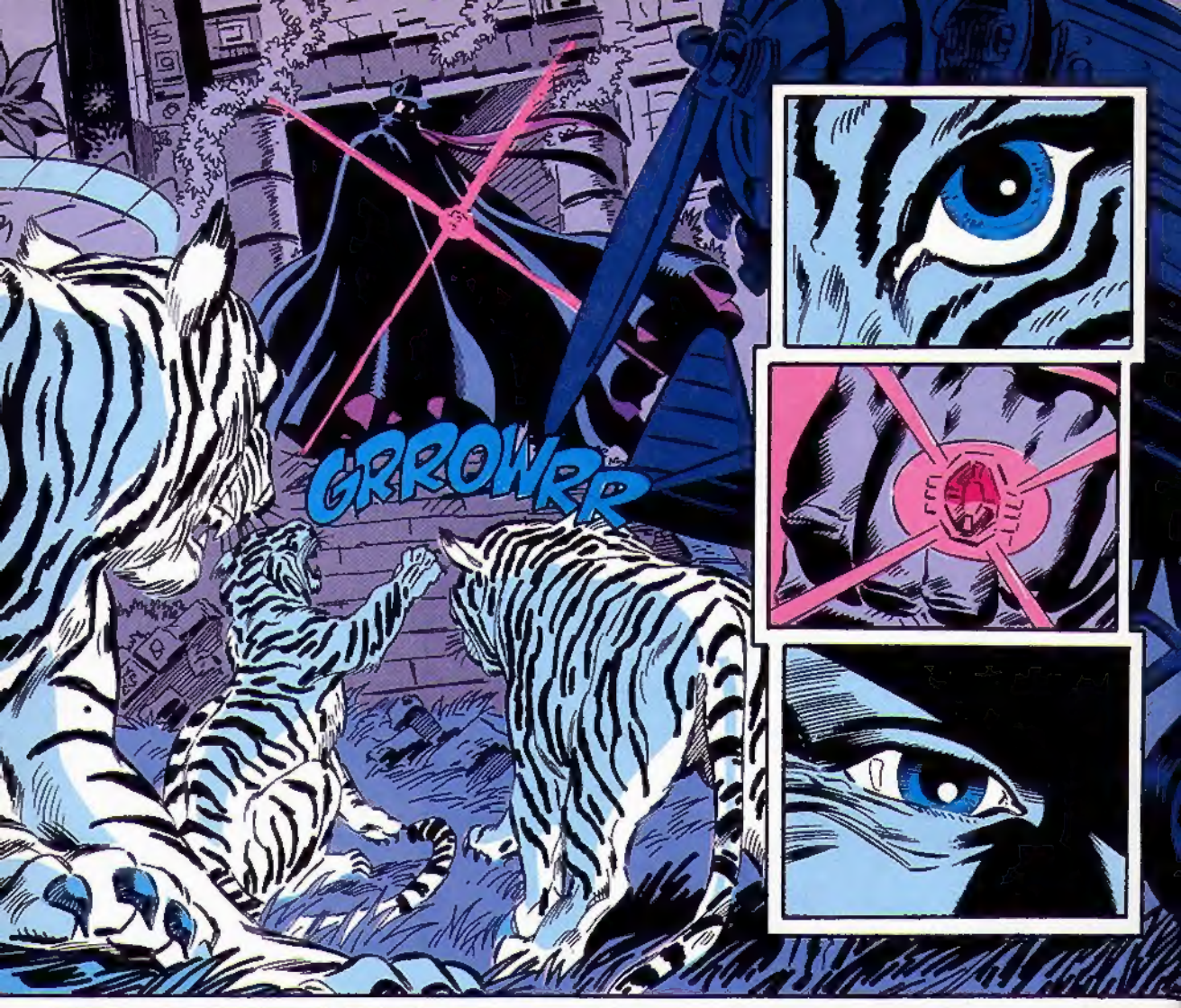
NO. SHE WILL GO WHERE SHE CAN DO HER MASTER THE MOST GOOD.

DOES "ULAN TA-SHAI" MEAN WHAT I THINK IT MEANS, YOU BIG NAUGHTY MONGOL?

WELL, MISS LANE. ENJOYING MY RADIO ROOM, I HOPE? HAVE MY TROOPS BEEN HELPING YOU SEND ANY INTERESTING MESSAGES?
AS A MATTER OF FACT, THEY HAVE, SHIWAN. FOR THE PAST SEVERAL DAYS.
IT'S AMAZING HOW MANY TRIPS IN AND OUT OF A CELL A GIRL CAN MAKE BEFORE ANYONE--
FFF?
I HAVE HAD MY FILL OF OUR ARCH REPARTEE, MISS LANE.
WHERE... IS THE SHADOW?

<ALMOST...>
<YOU MUST BE STEADY. STRIKE THE HIVE BEFORE THE BEES KNOW YOU ARE THERE.>
<YOU SEE NOW WHY WE DON'T GATHER HONEY IN THE WINDY SEASON!>
<WE DON'T?>

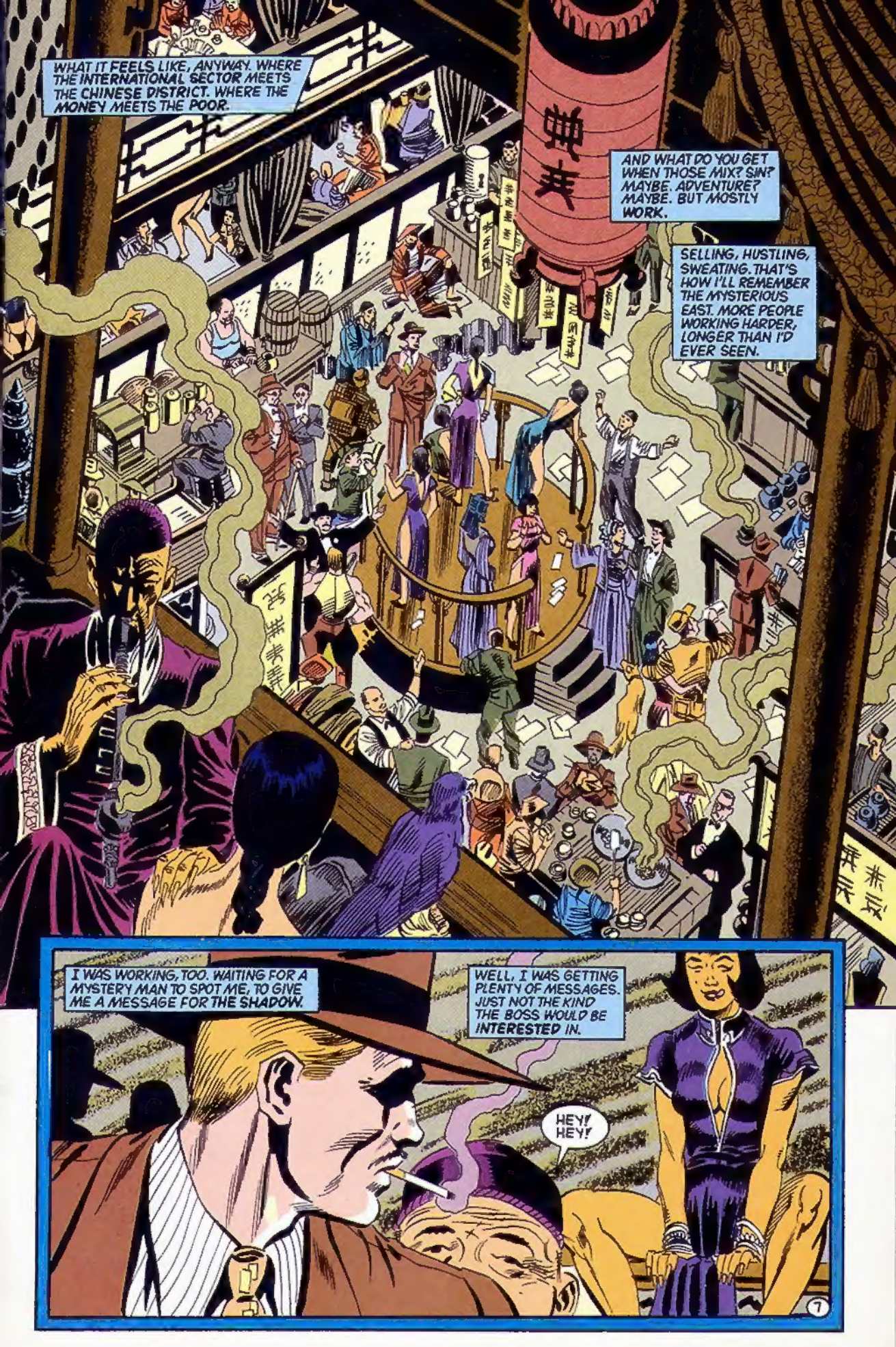

WHP WHP WHP WHP WHP WHP
<WHAT IS IT? AND WHY IS IT GOING... THERE?>
<CRAZY WESTERNERS. THEY THINK THAT JUST BECAUSE THEY CAN GO EVERYWHERE... THEY MUST.>
<WELL, THIS WESTERNER WON'T BE GOING ANY MORE PLACES...>
<...BECAUSE NO ONE COMES BACK AFTER MEETING THE WHITE TIGERS OF THE ANCIENT CITY!>
GRRT
5


GRROWRR

PRRR
PRRR
PRRR
I SEE THAT WE UNDERSTAND ONE ANOTHER.

THE SUN SINKS QUICKLY, PETS. LET US NOT DELAY.

HEART OF THE JUNGLE...


WHAT IT FEELS LIKE, ANYWAY. WHERE THE INTERNATIONAL SECTOR MEETS THE CHINESE DISTRICT. WHERE THE MONEY MEETS THE POOR.
AND WHAT DO YOU GET WHEN THOSE MIX? SIN? MAYBE. ADVENTURE? MAYBE. BUT MOSTLY WORK.
SELLING, HUSTLING, SWEATING. THAT'S HOW I'LL REMEMBER THE MYSTERIOUS EAST. MORE PEOPLE WORKING HARDER, LONGER THAN I'D EVER SEEN.
I WAS WORKING, TOO. WAITING FOR A MYSTERY MAN TO SPOT ME, TO GIVE ME A MESSAGE FOR THE SHADOW.
WELL, I WAS GETTING PLENTY OF MESSAGES. JUST NOT THE KIND THE BOSS WOULD BE INTERESTED IN.
HEY! HEY!

SNAKE BLOOD VERY GOOD! GIVE YOU YANG! MAKE YOU A MAN, YEAH?
YOU ENJOY SING-SONG GIRLS VERY LONG TIME!
YEAH, YEAH.

IF I HAD TO PUT UP WITH THIS MUCH LONGER, I WAS GOING TO START ANSWERING THOSE OTHER MESSAGES.
I'D LEFT ROOM IN MY POCKETS FOR THE MYSTERIOUS NOTE, BUT THAT DIDN'T MEAN THEY WERE EMPTY. I'D STUFFED A FEW BILLS IN, TOO.
I MEAN, THIS WAS SHANGHAI, AFTER ALL.

SNAKE VERY GOOD FOR HEALTH. GOOD FOR LONG LIFE AND MARRIAGE...
...AND MAYBE ESPECIALLY GOOD FOR MAN IN BLACK, YOU KNOW?

MAN IN... BLACK.

MAYBE I MAKE YOU GET IT YOURSELF, HUH?
BUT THEN YOU NEVER GET TO READ IT! HA-HA!
H.V.

YEAH, THE MYSTERY MAN FINALLY SPOTTED ME.
LUCKY ME.
H.V.

"UP THE YELLOW RIVER TO DEAD CLIFFS, THEN OVER TO A GREAT BUDDHA...
"...M.R."
MYRA RELDON. THE BOSS' "BEST FEMALE AGENT."
EVEN THOUGH MARGO'S THE ONE WILLING TO PLAY HOSTAGE FOR SHIWAN KHAN.
EVEN THOUGH SHE'S THE ONE THE BOSS ALWAYS PUTS IN DANGER, THE ONE WHOSE LIFE HE PLAYS GAMES WITH.
SHE'S THE ONE IN DANGER NOW, WHILE THE BOSS IS OFF ON SOME "SECRET MISSION," AND I WASTE MY TIME HERE TAKING NOTES FROM THIS RELDON--
HUH?

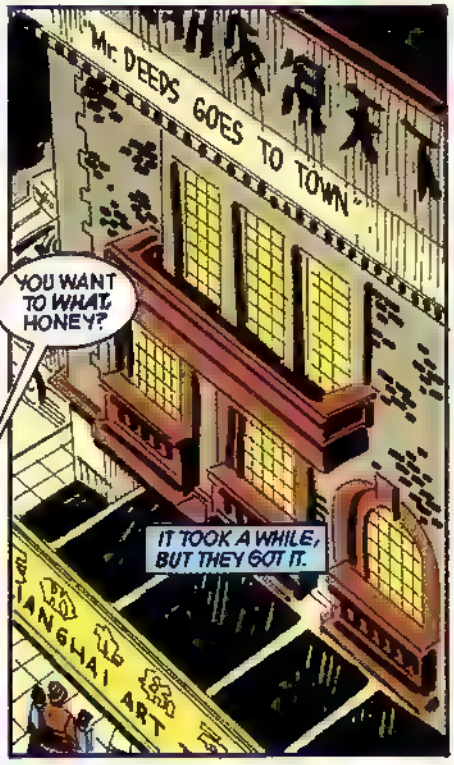
YOU COME TO YOUTH PALACE TO READ, HONEY?
CAN'T FIND SOMETHING BETTER?
JEEZ. HOW OLD ARE YOU? FIFTEEN?
WHAT ARE YOU DOING HERE? HOW'D YOU GET INTO THIS?

MY FAMILY TAKE ME HERE, JUST A POOR COUNTRY GIRL, NO WAY TO FEED.
AND JIANG, HER FAMILY DIE IN THE WAR UP NORTH. THEY HELP HER HERE. YOU WANT HELP US TOO, HONEY?
STORIES I'D HEARD BEFORE. STORIES RELIVED EVERY YEAR.

LIKE A STORY I'D HEARD JUST RECENTLY. ABOUT A FRIEND OF MINE.
MARGO.

YOU LIKE THESE? SPECIAL PRICE TODAY FOR TWO GIRL.
YEAH. FINE. AS LONG AS I CAN TAKE THEM OUT.
YOU WASTE YOUR MONEY, PAY FOR EXTRA TIME, PAY FOR HOTEL...
I SAID I'M TAKING THEM OUT!
LISTEN, YOU GIRLS LIKE MOVIES?
NO, NO, NO! YOU HAVE TO PAY EXTRA TO MAKE MOVIES!

DAMN IT, I DON'T WANT TO MAKE MOVIES... I WANT TO TAKE YOU TO MOVIES!


Mr. DEEDS GOES TO TOWN
YOU WANT TO WHAT, HONEY?
IT TOOK A WHILE, BUT THEY GOT IT.
BY SHANGHAI ART

IT WAS JUST SOME HOLLYWOOD FLUFF--TRYING TO TELL US THAT MONEY DOESN'T BRING HAPPINESS AND LOVE DOES.
BUT THE GIRLS SEEMED TO LIKE IT.
FOR SOME REASON.

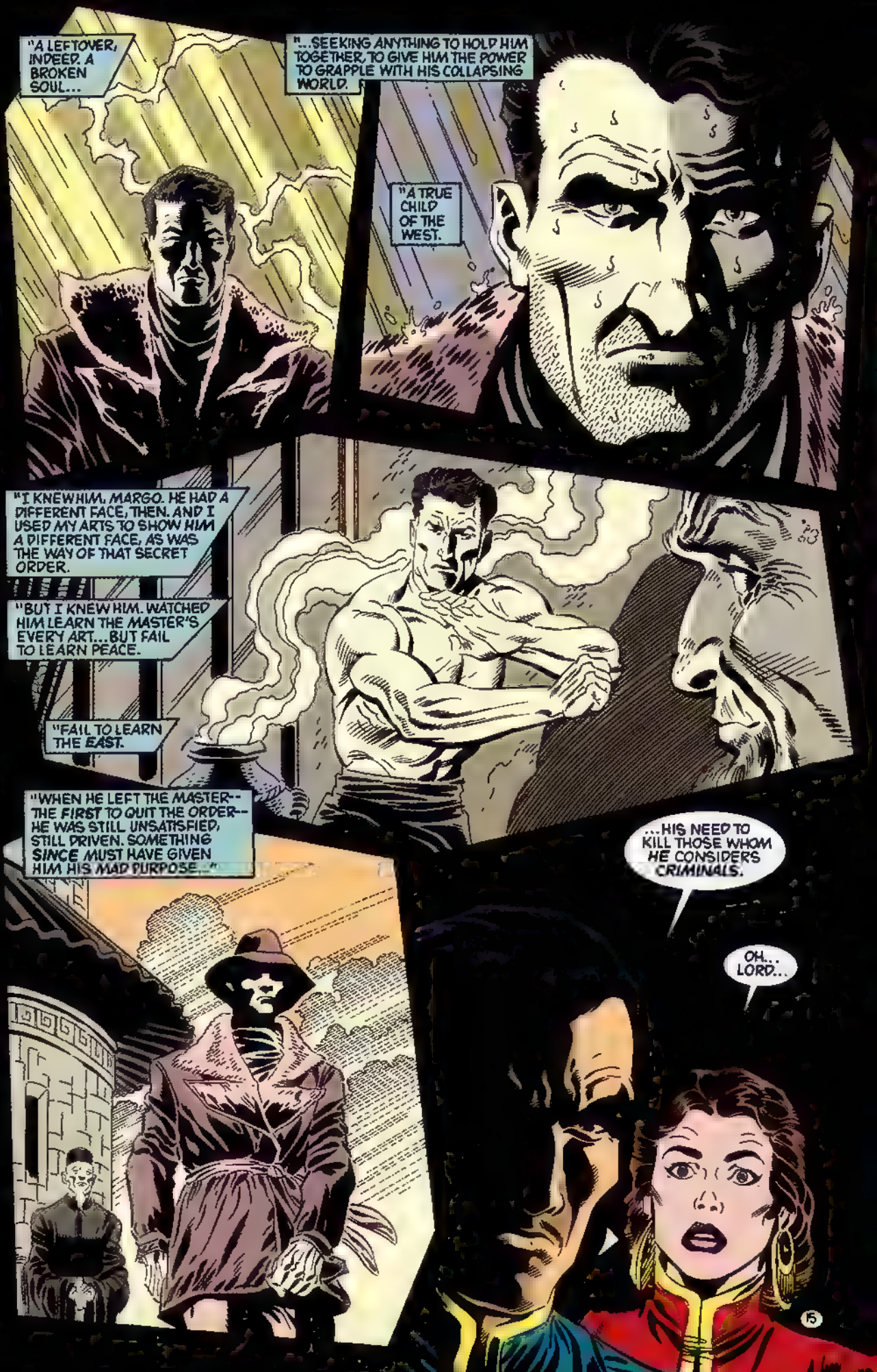
THAT WAS NICE DATE, HONEY... BUT YOU PAY US TOO MUCH FOR ONLY THAT!
YEAH, WELL... PUT THE BALANCE TOWARD MY TAB.
AND THAT WAS MY VOYAGE INTO SHANGHAI SIN.

IT WAS ENOUGH. IT KILLED AN EVENING. BROUGHT THE TIME THAT MUCH CLOSER THAT I COULD HOOK UP WITH THE BOSS...
...AND GO AFTER MARGO.
"IN XANADU DID SHIWAN KHAN A STATELY PLEASURE-DOME DECREE..."
...WITH MILITARY BARRACKS ATTACHED, OF COURSE...
...WHERE ALPH, THE SACRED RIVER RAN, THROUGH CAVERNS MEASURELESS TO MAN..."
ET CETERA.
I CAN NEVER THINK OF COLERIDGE'S LITTLE POEM WITHOUT A TWINGE OF GUILT.
PERHAPS THAT'S WHY I'VE TRIED TO REPLICATE IT IN REALITY.
YOU SEE, I AM RESPONSIBLE FOR THE FACT THAT IT HAS NO CONCLUSION. I WAS LIVING IN PORLOCK AT THE TIME, AND DROPPED IN TO VISIT MR. COLERIDGE...
...LITTLE KNOWING THAT HE WAS IN AN OPIUM TRANCE AND WAS COMPOSING THAT PRETTY VISION.
OF COURSE, I WAS HIS SUPPLIER OF OPIUM, AND SO HE WASN'T ENTIRELY UNHAPPY TO SEE ME.
YOU'LL HAVE TO DO BETTER THAN THAT, SHIWAN. COLERIDGE MUST HAVE DIED TWO HUNDRED YEARS AGO!

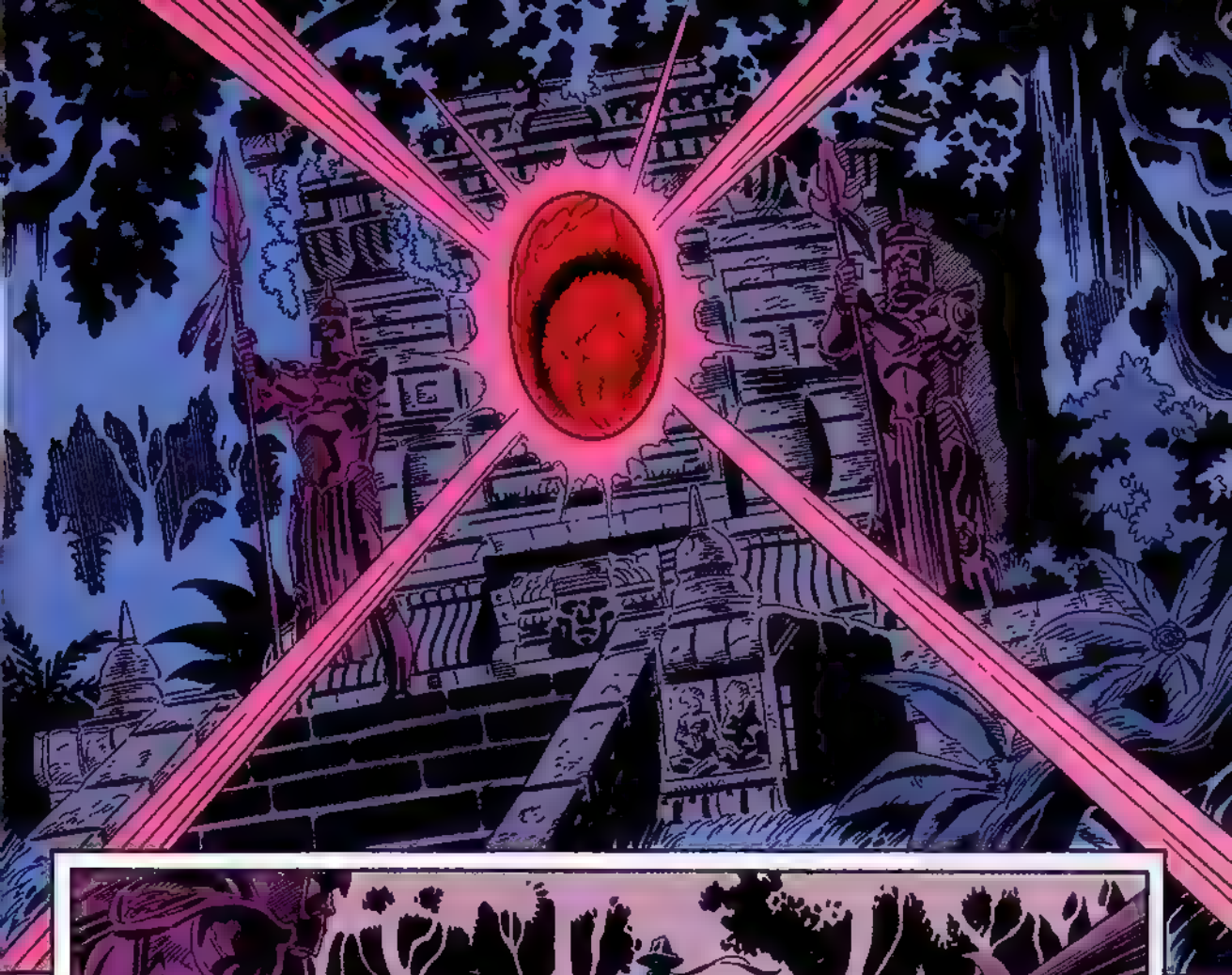
BARELY A HUNDRED AND THREE, MISS LANE. YOU DISAPPOINT ME.
I WAS YOUNGER THEN, AND ENJOYED THE COMPANY OF POETS. LATELY I'VE FOUND MUNITIONS MAKERS AND INDUSTRIALS MORE... STIMULATING.
MM-HM. AND WHAT WAS GEORGE WASHINGTON LIKE?
DREARY.
I'D HAVE THOUGHT A CULTURED LADY LIKE YOURSELF WOULD KNOW THE LIVES OF THE POETS BETTER.
OR ARE YOU A CULTURED LADY?
I READ MY SHARE OF POETS. CARL SANDBURG... JOYCE KILMER...
OH, DEAR GODS! THE TASTES OF AMERICANS!
COARSE SENSIBILITIES! UNBRIDLED PASSIONS! MIND-CLOGGING SENTIMENT!
YOU'VE GIVEN THE WORLD ONLY ONE TRUE POET, AND HIM YOU DO NOT READ! ONLY ROBINSON JEFFERS, WITH HIS HARD, PITILESS, COSMIC EYE--HE COULD ALMOST BE CHINESE.
SUCH ARE THE VIRTUES THE WEST SEEKS IN THE EAST. BUT EVEN WHEN FINDING THEM, YOU CANNOT MAKE THOSE VIRTUES YOUR OWN.
JUST LIKE YOUR "MASTER," AND THAT IS WHY HE WILL ENTER MY TRAP...SEARCHING FOR YOU.
YOU DON'T KNOW HIM. HE'LL DO WHATEVER HE THINKS IS RIGHT. I DON'T EVEN ENTER THE PICTURE.
OH, BUT I DO KNOW HIM, MISS LANE. BETTER THAN YOU.
AND FOR FAR LONGER.

WE ALL MEET EACH OTHER EVENTUALLY, MISS LANE. ALL OF US CAUGHT BETWEEN CULTURES, BETWEEN RACES, BETWEEN EPOCHS.
YOU KNOW IT AS WELL AS I, MARGO. OUR ROUTES ALL CROSS ON THE ROADS BETWEEN WORLDS.
"I WAS A SON OF CHINESE ROYALTY. YET OCCIDENTAL BLOOD FLOWED IN MY VEINS, THE BLOOD OF A FALLEN MISSIONARY WOMAN...WHO BECAME MY FATHER'S CONCUBINE.
"DENIED A SHARE OF MY FATHER'S POWER, I SOUGHT POWER ELSEWHERE...
"...AMONG MY MOTHER'S RACE. I LEARNED FROM THE BEST THE WEST COULD OFFER. FROM ARNOLD AT QUEBEC. FROM NAPOLEON AT LODI...
"...BUT I KNEW THINGS THAT NO WESTERNER EVER KNEW. HOW TO LIVE WITHOUT AGING. TO LIVE LONG ENOUGH TO SEE THE DECADENCE OF WESTERN POWER, THE LACK OF CONCENTRATION THAT WOULD FINALLY LEAVE THE WEST VULNERABLE.

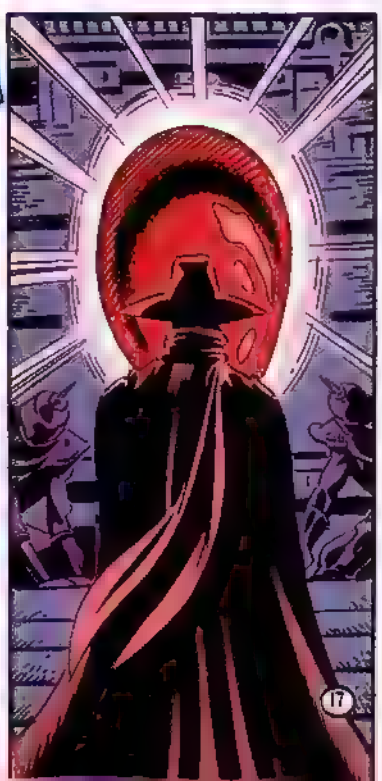
"AT LAST I HEARD OF ONE WESTERNER, A MAD RUSSIAN, WHOSE MYSTIC TRAINING IN CENTRAL ASIA GAVE HIM MASTERY OF WESTERN POWERS.
"I WANTED THAT POWER. I SOUGHT RASPUTIN'S ANCIENT MASTER AND LEARNED HIS WAY OF CONCENTRATION.
"EVERY ART OF SELF-CONTROL AND CONTROL OF OTHERS... I LEARNED THEM ALL. THE ONLY LESSON I WOULD NOT LEARN WAS THAT OF THE DEATH OF SELF.
"I WANTED TO BE AN EMPEROR. AND I KNEW THE MASTER'S ARTS COULD MAKE ME ONE.
"THEN HE CAME. A WHITE MAN IN AVIATOR'S GARB. A LEFTOVER FROM THE 'WORLD WAR' WITH WHICH THE WEST HAD JUST ATTEMPTED SUICIDE.


"A LEFTOVER, INDEED. A BROKEN SOUL...
"...SEEKING ANYTHING TO HOLD HIM TOGETHER, TO GIVE HIM THE POWER TO GRAPPLE WITH HIS COLLAPSING WORLD.
"A TRUE CHILD OF THE WEST.
"I KNEW HIM, MARGO. HE HAD A DIFFERENT FACE, THEN. AND I USED MY ARTS TO SHOW HIM A DIFFERENT FACE, AS WAS THE WAY OF THAT SECRET ORDER.
"BUT I KNEW HIM. WATCHED HIM LEARN THE MASTER'S EVERY ART... BUT FAIL TO LEARN PEACE.
"FAIL TO LEARN THE EAST.
"WHEN HE LEFT THE MASTER-- THE FIRST TO QUIT THE ORDER-- HE WAS STILL UNSATISFIED, STILL DRIVEN. SOMETHING SINCE MUST HAVE GIVEN HIM HIS MAD PURPOSE..."
...HIS NEED TO KILL THOSE WHOM HE CONSIDERS CRIMINALS.
OH... LORD...
15

YOU SEE, MY DEAR, I KEEP MY SOUL PERFECTLY CONCENTRATED ON MY GRAND DREAM... MY DREAM OF CONQUERING ASIA.
MY WESTERN COUNTERPART IS TRAPPED BY HIS OBSESSIONS. THAT IS WHY HE MUST COME. NO MATTER WHAT MESSAGES YOU SEDUCE MY MEN INTO BROADCASTING, HE WILL COME...
...AND THAT WILL BE THE SHADOW'S UNDOING.
BRRRR!
RRRR
SILENCE...
...WE ARE THERE.



CHAK KETA
CHAK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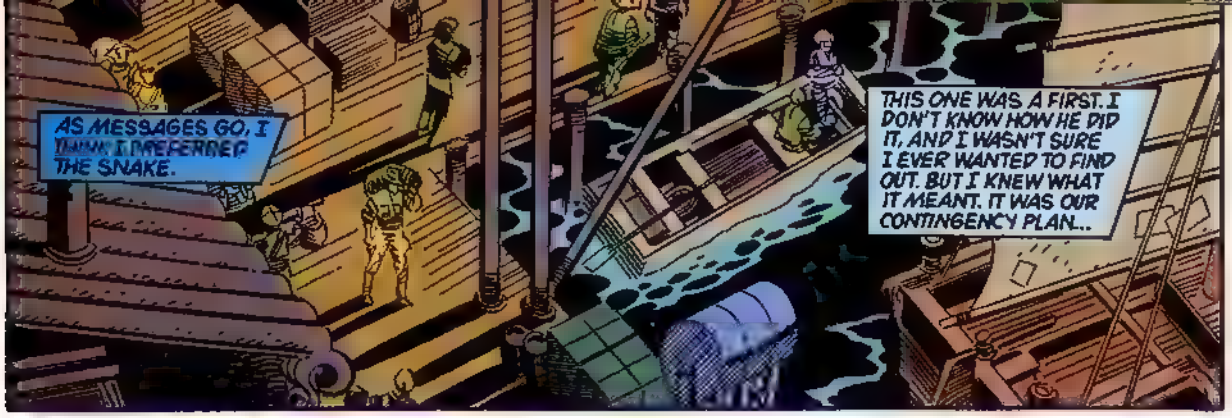
WELCOME...
...FIRE OPAL...
...STONE OF MY STONE...
...FLAME OF MY FLAME...
...WELCOME HOME.

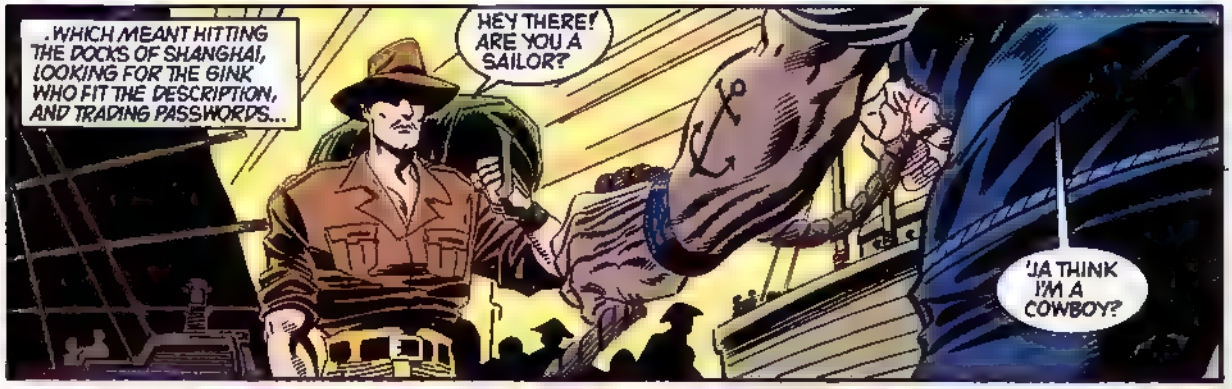
WHERE HAVE YOU BEEN, LITTLE OPAL? WHAT HAVE YOU KNOWN SINCE THEY BROKE YOU FROM ME?
I HAVE KNOWN MUCH, MOTHER OPAL. I HAVE KNOWN THE CARESS OF EMPERORS, AND KNOWN THE SHATTERING OF MY FORM...
...I HAVE KNOWN A DISTANT COURT, WHERE I WAS GIFT AND GUEST..
...I HAVE KNOWN THE LUST OF CONQUERORS WHO SOUGHT TO TAP MY FIRE...
...AND I HAVE KNOWN A MISSION, MOTHER OPAL. KNOWN A MISSION THAT BURNS RED FLAME, KNOWN A MISSION WHOSE HEAT I FUEL.

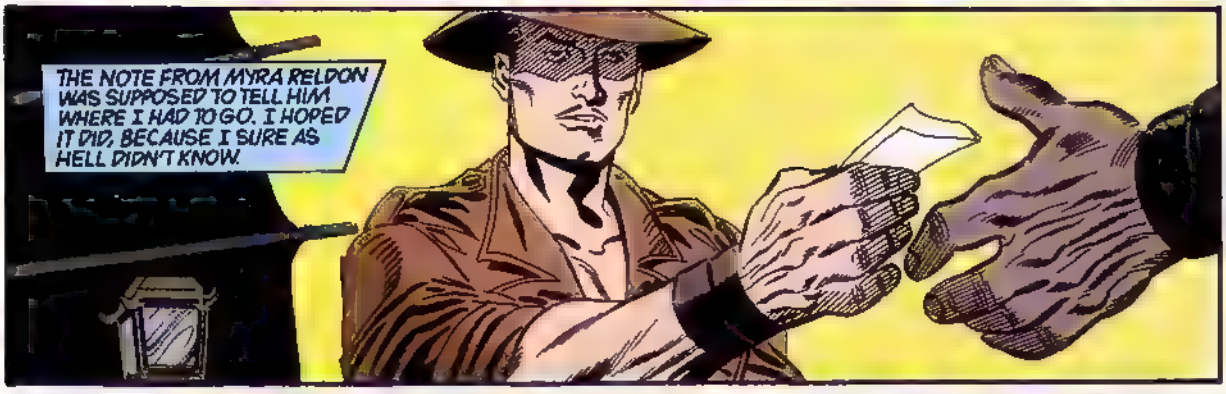
HE'S OUT THERE! I CAN FEEL HIM!
HE'S IN A PLACE OF POWER! POWER I DID NOT KNOW ABOUT!
WELL, LET HIM HAVE HIS POWER! HE WILL NOT BRING ME DOWN! NO ONE WILL BRING ME DOWN!
KSHH
SLAM
WELL! THAT WAS SUDDEN.
I HOPE IT WAS SOMETHING I SAID.
PL-PLEASE, NOW... FOOD...
MM. CUTE LITTLE DUMPLINGS.
AND YOU'RE A PRETTY CUTE LITTLE DUMPLING YOURSELF. WHY IS YOUR HAND TREMBLING, HMMM?
N-NO, PLEASE...
TELL ME, HOW DOES THE GREAT KHAN AFFORD SUCH FINE SERVANTS AND EXQUISITE FOOD?
JUST WHERE DOES HE GET HIS MONEY?
...I...I CANNOT...
OH, HUSH...
...WHAT'S TO BE AFRAID OF? I MEAN, REALLY... COULD A LITTLE GIRL LIKE ME POSSIBLY ENDANGER A GREAT STRONG MAN LIKE YOUR KHAN?

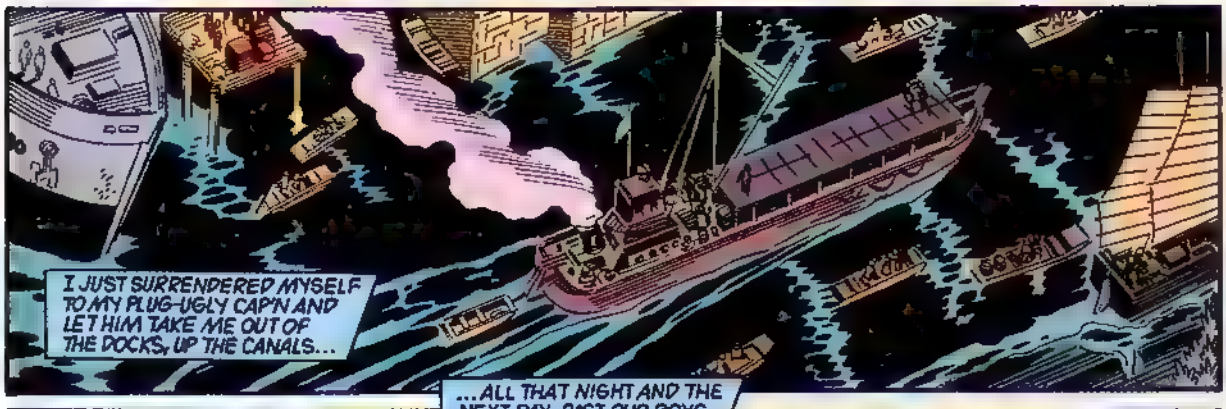
HEART OF THE JUNGLE
REALLY
HEART OF THE JUNGLE.
AAAAAA
AAAA
AAAA

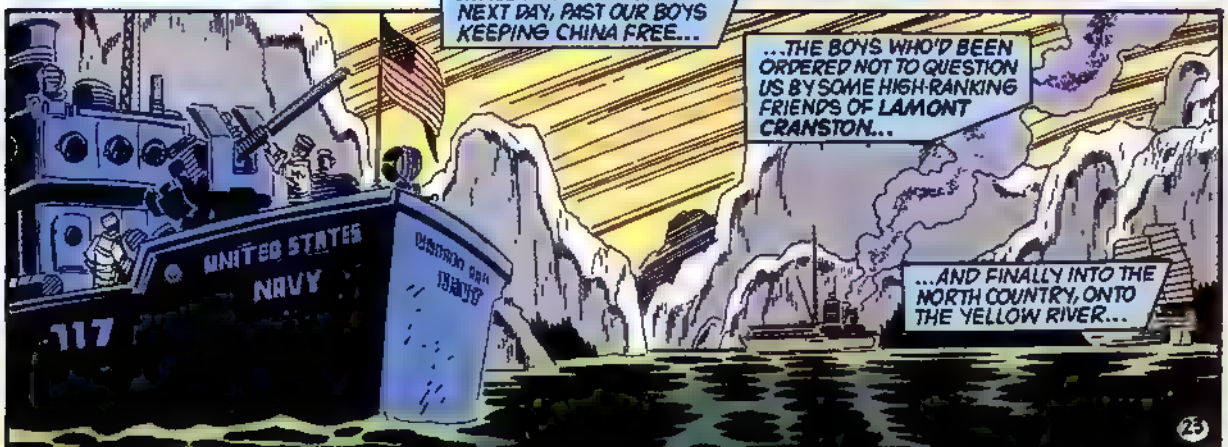
NO... NO...
HARRY VINCENT...
...THE DOCKS, HARRY VINCENT.
THE DOCKS!
THE DOCKS!
WHOOSH
OHH!
OH...
..JEEZ...
22

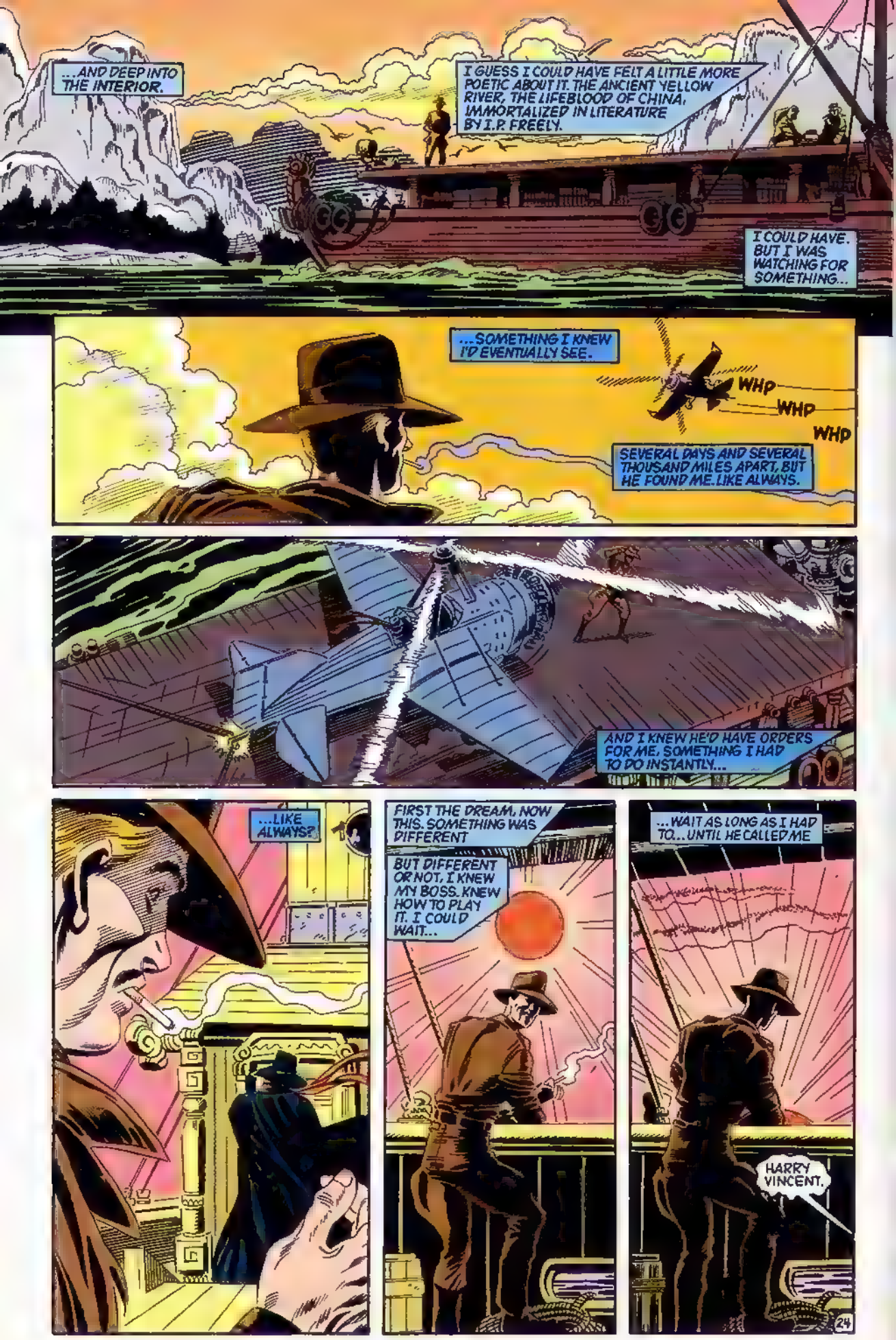

AS MESSAGES GO, I THINK I PREFERRED THE SNAKE.
THIS ONE WAS A FIRST. I DON'T KNOW HOW HE DID IT, AND I WASN'T SURE I EVER WANTED TO FIND OUT. BUT I KNEW WHAT IT MEANT. IT WAS OUR CONTINGENCY PLAN...


...WHICH MEANT HITTING THE DOCKS OF SHANGHAI, LOOKING FOR THE GINK WHO FIT THE DESCRIPTION, AND TRADING PASSWORDS...
HEY THERE! ARE YOU A SAILOR?
'JA THINK I'M A COWBOY?


THE NOTE FROM MYRA RELDON WAS SUPPOSED TO TELL HIM WHERE I HAD TO GO. I HOPED IT DID, BECAUSE I SURE AS HELL DIDN'T KNOW.


I JUST SURRENDERED MYSELF TO MY PLUG-UGLY CAP'N AND LET HIM TAKE ME OUT OF THE DOCKS, UP THE CANALS...


...ALL THAT NIGHT AND THE NEXT DAY, PAST OUR BOYS KEEPING CHINA FREE...
...THE BOYS WHO'D BEEN ORDERED NOT TO QUESTION US BY SOME HIGH-RANKING FRIENDS OF LAMONT CRANSTON...
...AND FINALLY INTO THE NORTH COUNTRY, ONTO THE YELLOW RIVER...
UNITED STATES
NAVY
117


...AND DEEP INTO THE INTERIOR.
I GUESS I COULD HAVE FELT A LITTLE MORE POETIC ABOUT IT. THE ANCIENT YELLOW RIVER, THE LIFEBLOOD OF CHINA, IMMORTALIZED IN LITERATURE BY I.P. FREELY.
I COULD HAVE. BUT I WAS WATCHING FOR SOMETHING...
...SOMETHING I KNEW I'D EVENTUALLY SEE.
WHP
WHP
WHP
SEVERAL DAYS AND SEVERAL THOUSAND MILES APART, BUT HE FOUND ME. LIKE ALWAYS.
AND I KNEW HE'D HAVE ORDERS FOR ME. SOMETHING I HAD TO DO INSTANTLY...
...LIKE ALWAYS?
FIRST THE DREAM, NOW THIS. SOMETHING WAS DIFFERENT
BUT DIFFERENT OR NOT, I KNEW MY BOSS. KNEW HOW TO PLAY IT. I COULD WAIT...
...WAIT AS LONG AS I HAD TO... UNTIL HE CALLED ME
HARRY VINCENT.

BOSS?
CAN HARDLY SEE ANYTHING. WHAT ARE YOU...
...OO...
SIT BEFORE ME, HARRY VINCENT. I HAVE MUCH TO SAY.
LIKE I SAY. THE DREAM, AND NOW THIS. SOMETHING WAS DIFFERENT.
NEXT: THE DEPTHS

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To Whom it may concern;

In a letters page of a past THE SHADOW STRIKES! it was mentioned that no reasonable way was found to make the Shadow invisible. I think that Walter Gibson may have given us a way to solve this for comics.

In his books Walter Gibson uses the artifice of stating that when the Shadow be-clouds men's minds, a strange shaped shadow remains. It could be made to look either as if there were a shadow leaving a shadow or, as when Hawkman must deal with a shadow being a shadow with substance. [ed. note: Refers to the Shadow Thief. See WHO'S WHO IN THE DC UNIVERSE] Another alternative would make the space where the Shadow was look just a bit out of focus or blurred, but still having a shadow looking like THE Shadow.

Additionally, when the Shadow is disguised as anyone but Lamont Cranston he would leave a Shadow's shadow, except when the Shadow and Cranston are both in the same story, or the Shadow should always have a Shadow shadow no matter what his disguise, somewhat like Plastic Man's belt always being shown even when Plastic Man was in any kind of disguise.

These artifices would allow the Shadow to be invisible in the comic as well as giving a clue when he is in disguise.

Another thing: When the Shadow crosses open ground as invisible, only his shadow should be pictured, like the shadows are drawn for Hawkman's shadow fighters.

This should help you keep up the good quality of your book as well as keeping with the character of the Shadow.

Bruce S. Baker
Pahrump, NV

Okay, let me see if I have this right. If the Shadow were shadowing someone, we would only see the Shadow's shadow, not the Shadow himself. Then, of course, we would also see the shadow of the person the Shadow was shadowing, unless they were in the shadows, in which case only the shadowing Shadow's shadow would be visible. I think I need a blackboard...and an aspirin.

* * * * *

Dear Gerard,

DC is slipping with their letters pages lately...like, too many comics are coming out without any. Of course, in some series, this could be taken as a bad warning sign, an indication that sales, and reader interest in general, is falling. Remember how in NEW GODS last year the editor had to BEG for mail...and still didn't get any?

THE SHADOW STRIKES! #23 was the most exciting issue of this series in quite some time. Perhaps it's the fact that I read #21 and #22 only days before #23, and so the flow of the story was clearer. Perhaps Shiwan Khan, and the mystery behind his character, as well as the Shadow himself, is what makes this more interesting than just about every previous storyline. Maybe I'm really dying to find out what's with this Margo Lane dame (at least, in YOUR version of things!). Maybe it's all that. Heck, the art's nice as well. I wish Rod Whigham could still be doing DOC SAVAGE (especially the present-day adventures) but he's doing a more than adequate job replacing Eduardo Barreto. New inker Gerry Fernandez seems to add a strangely delicate touch that really suits a story about an oriental super-villain. Overall, this is a really nice package.

Ever since this new SHADOW series began, we've been promised a slowly unfolding look into the deep, mysterious background of the Shadow and his agents. We've gotten bits and pieces over the last two years, but so slowly that it's downright painful...and I'm worried about the longevity of this series allowing you the leisure of unraveling your mysteries so slowly. Have the sales on this book continued...or dropped off as they apparently did on its predecessor, as well as DOC SAVAGE? Certainly this series has not suffered from overexposure...I haven't seen a single ad for THE SHADOW STRIKES! since the DOC SAVAGE crossover story.

I'm glad this story has caught my interest, because for the longest time now, this series has held borderline interest for me. I've finally gotten past the point where "completing a collection" means much anymore, and the high entertainment level of each individual issue has become paramount. Some series I've taken to checking credits BEFORE I buy, and picking up only those by creators I know I can trust. The truth is, I still think of the Andy Helfer/Kyle Baker stories as "gospel" when it comes to the Shadow's background. This is understandable when you consider that THE SHADOW was my #1 favorite comic every month when those guys were doing it. Since then I don't think it's been in the top 20. It's just personal taste, I know, and I don't really know what to suggest. If you can keep the creative team consistent and concentrate at least part of every storyline on the Shadow's past, maybe you'll keep my interest like you did this month. (Now, where are those letters pages???)

Henry R. Kujawa
Camden, NJ

Now, Henry, there have been letter columns in every issue since I came on board with issue #24, and while I'd love to promise a continuation of their appearance, I gotta tell you it just plain hasn't been that easy. Dan Thorsland, when he had this column, begged for letters. I continued begging when I started. I have printed virtually every letter I have received. But, it comes down to this simple fact: In order for you to read a letter column, I have to get letters. Enough of that.

On a more serious note, THE SHADOW STRIKES! #31 will be the final issue of this incarnation of the stories of the Shadow. I can repeat the litany of sagging sales, competition for a decent market share and a thousand other reasons but, suffice it to say, the Shadow is going away for a while. And, that's the good news. There is a very good chance he will be back sometime next year, in an as yet undecided form. To get your ideas across as to what form he will take, please write in.

For now, here is an idea of what you can expect from us in the next few months. We're not going out with a whimper, but with a bang.

Next month will be the climactic final issue of the Shiwan Khan saga. Look for a big finish.

In issue #28, The Shadow, Margo, and Harry are on vacation in Hawaii. The guest artist will be Steve Leialoha.

It's back to work in New York with art by Dan Spiegle in issue #29.

And, for our final two issues, a story you've all been waiting for, one we like to call THE SHADOW—YEAR ONE, brought to you by Messrs. Jones and Whigham, 'cause it's only right.

—Bob Kahan

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Comics for Earth

Not long ago, I mentioned that *Inside DC* would occasionally spotlight letters from our fans that mention topics important to DC and the comic-book industry. The following letter, written to DC's Vice President/Editorial Director Dick Giordano this spring by Chris Shorb of Santa Barbara, CA, addresses an issue that many comics readers currently have on their minds: printing comics on *recycled paper.*

Dear Decision-maker,

This is a letter that is going out to a dozen of the major comics publishers in the field. It is in regard to the idea of using recycled paper in the making of comics. I think that this is an idea whose time has come. Unfortunately, I am unaware of the actual cost difference in using recycled paper as opposed to "new" paper, but I can't believe that it is more expensive to print on recycled paper than it is to print on "new" paper. If only one or two comics in your whole line of product were printed on recycled paper, I'm sure the effect on the overall employment of trees, as well as your printing budget, would be significant (if not necessarily large). If every one of the publishers to whom I send this letter takes this idea to heart, and also to use, the impact would be felt industry-wide (in not only comics but in the paper industry, as well).

As of this writing, I know of only one book on the market today that is physically environmentally sound —Marvel UK's *Knights of Pendragon.* Soon to be released are Dark Horse's *Concrete* and Tundra's *Rain,* both of which have been solicited as being printed on recycled paper. I salute all three companies in their efforts to keep our planet as green as possible, but I think that more can be done. As more comics companies begin to use recycled paper, it will become less of a specialty item and therefore more accessible and certainly less expensive. Understandably, the intrinsic quality of the physical book may suffer, but since the cost of production would decrease, the lower possible cover price will entice more readers and, in the long run, result in more sales. Also, if the fact of the usage of recycled paper is tied into the creative content of the product as in the above-mentioned examples (and, hypothetically, DC's GREEN ARROW, Comico's *Elementals,* or Harvey's *Richie Rich*), the very fact of being printed on recycled paper could be used as a promotional hook.

A final reason, while somewhat alarmist, to use recycled paper is that the comics industry is based on a finite supply of a particular resource —paper. The longer there is paper around due to recycling efforts, the longer there will be comics.

Some background about myself: I am the assistant manager at the only comics shop in Santa Barbara, Comics on Parade. I am therefore not simply an outsider looking in and suggesting changes, but someone who is very concerned with the entire comics industry, from the creator to the retailer to the "buy three already-bagged copies and put them in more bags" collector. As comics begin to "come of age," more and more media attention will be directed inward the industry as a whole, exploring both the good and the bad. If many companies are applying environmentally sound means of production to their comics —and this is perceived by the greater non-comics-reading public —this can only benefit us all. As the image of the comic book/graphic story improves, so rises the level of cash in our coffers, but more important, so rises our self-esteem. Using recycled paper, even on an initially small scale, can accomplish all this.

Thank you,
Christopher H. Shorb
Santa Barbara, CA

And thank you, Chris, for caring enough about the environment and our industry to write DC and other comics publishers.

Before reading your letter, I also wondered why DC and other comics houses didn't print more books on recycled paper. Your heartfelt missive prompted me to do more than just wonder, so I asked my big boss, Dick Giordano, and DC's Production Director, Bob Rozakis, about the matter, and was surprised to learn the following facts:

First, it is indeed more expensive to publish comic books on recycled paper—decidedly and, as of this writing, prohibitively more expensive. While the potential use of recycled paper has become a public concern, unfortunately it is currently far from becoming a practicality, as there are very few companies whose business is the processing of recycled paper suitable for printing. If DC were to utilize the recycled paper currently available on all or most of its titles, it would not be without a substantial increase in the cost of each of our titles—something we (and, undoubtedly, our readers) want to avoid. But as the demand for recycled paper increases in the future, one can assume that an affordable, more accessible recycled paper product will become available.

Also, the current quality of recycled paper falls below the standards that DC and our fans expect. Recycled paper isn't as white or durable as the paper being used on our titles today, and comics readers have come to expect better quality in reproduction during the past decade. With DC's dedication to quality, we can't print superior stories on less-than-superior paper. I'm sure by now you've read SUPERMAN FOR EARTH, DC's first publishing effort on recycled paper. While that book was a creative, critical, and commercial success for us, we experienced a few production problems with it, all stemming from the first-time use of recycled paper.

Let me assure you, however, that DC is not giving up on recycled paper. As soon as the paper-manufacturing technology improves and a high-quality, affordable product is available (which *will* happen, mind you —pocket calculators were expensive items when they first appeared, but after technological advancements, they became easily affordable and quite commonplace), you will see more of our titles published on recycled paper. And we'll do everything in our power to help that technology along, as fast as possible. But until that time, the themes of recycling and saving the environment will continue to be explored more frequently in our stories, in an effort to make DC's fans more aware of global ecological concerns. And we encourage our readers to become involved with the recycling movement on a grass-roots level —effective recycling begins at home.

See you next week.

—*Michael Eury*

inside DC 5

Try It—You'll Like It!

I've always been a fan of the underdog—growing up as an overweight kid helps you develop that kind of empathy. My support of the "little guy" has also trickled over into my comic-book reading. When I became a DC Comics fan in elementary school, most of my friends were wild over series like BATMAN, SUPERMAN, and *The Amazing Spider-Man;* while I read and loved those titles, overlooked books like METAMORPHO, THE CREEPER, ANTHRO, and TEEN TITANS became some of my favorites.

Today, I enjoy super-popular *(and highly promoted)* comics like ROBIN and LOBO just as much as the next guy, but I still tend to favor lesser-known titles. DC's most underrated recent series, in my opinion, was

HAWK & DOVE, a book I'm proud to have edited for over a year. HAWK & DOVE contained elements that made me a comics fan in the first place: strong characterization, lots of action, accessible stories, and solid writing and art. Sadly, HAWK & DOVE was recently cancelled *(but not before a few major changes took place)*, but I encourage you to pick it up to see what sheer comics-reading joy you've been missing.

After polling a handful of my colleagues on the DC books they feel are most underrated, I received the following responses:

SGT. ROCK, according to Group Editor/Director of Development Mike Gold, contains "some of the best artwork in comics' history," plus "solid archetypal characters—almost a textbook in character creation." Mike concludes by saying, "but that art: Kubert, Severin, Krigstein, Kubert, Toth, Heath, Kubert... you don't get any better."

SGT. ROCK's backup, Enemy Ace *(also the star of DC's ENEMY ACE: WAR IDYLL graphic novel by George Pratt)* gets a vote from Associate Editor Kim Yale, who asserts that World War I's "Hammer of Hell" is "DC's most *romantic* character, set in one of the most pivotal times in history and a truly stupid *(more so than usual)* war. Kim feels that ENEMY ACE is a series "that has the potential to appeal to both women and men."

Martha Thomases, DC's Publicity Manager, votes for SHADE, THE CHANGING MAN, asserting "it has

everything—conspiracy theories, sexual insecurity, psychedelia, mental instability, paranoia, and mythological creatures." *(Wait a minute, Martha—are you sure you aren't describing the staff of DC Comics? Okay, fellow workers, put the sharpened pencils down... that was a joke.)* "All this, plus great story and art, too! What more can you ask for $1.75?"

SHADE also gets the nod from editor Tom Peyer, who contends that "Chris Bachalo and Mark Pennington's art is very confident and very wild, grounded in a realism that really helps to sell the crazy stuff... and Peter Milligan's stories are disturbing and surprising and funny and disgusting. Jamie Hewlett's covers are all of those things, too."

One of the titles Tom edits, DOOM PATROL, receives enthusiastic support from "Boy Production Manager" Rick Taylor, who chooses it "just for its sheer wildness and weirdness. It's groovy." *("Groovy," Rick? You've been watching those* Brady Bunch *reruns again, haven't you...?)*

L.E.G.I.O.N. '91 is DC's most underrated title, or so says Bob Greenberger, our Manager of Editorial Scheduling who's also known as our STAR TREK editor. Bob describes L.E.G.I.O.N. as a "very solid, entertaining space opera with a strong spine and engaging characters. The Barry Kitson art has been terrific." Bob adds that the book "broadens the 'universe' part of the DC Universe. Good, fun stuff!"

DOCTOR FATE is a favorite of Marketing Representative Patty Jeres, the lady responsible for bringing our DIRECT CURRENTS newsletters to you. "The current incarnation mixes a fantastical concept with a 'real world' setting." Patty feels that DOCTOR FATE is overlooked "due to the copious changes involved in the series," but closes by saying, "Me, I *like* it!"

Finally, THE DEMON is nominated by editor Dan Raspler, who asks, "can I vote for a title I work on? Do I get anything if I win?" Dan feels THE DEMON deserves a much wider audience, and that once new readers get a look at Etrigan, Klarion, and Harry the pillow-man, THE DEMON will give even ROBIN a run for his money in the popularity department.

So there's a sampling of DC titles you may not currently buy. I'll poll more of our staff on this topic for a future column, but why not share your views with DC's readers by sending your choice for DC's most underrated series to me at **Inside DC, c/o DC Comics Inc., 1325 Avenue of the Americas, New York, NY 10019.** Keep your responses brief, please, and in the future I'll share them with everyone else in this forum.

And instead of buying multiple copies of that next speculative hit, why not spend a few of your comics dollars on some of the above—or other—comics with which you're unfamiliar. You, and the comics industry, will be much richer for it.

See you next week.

—Michael Eury